

CHRISTMAS DOUBLE NUMBER. **THE QUAVER,**

WITH WHICH IS PUBLISHED "CHORAL HARMONY,"

A monthly Advocate of Popular Musical Education,
And Exponent of the Letter-note Method.

All Correspondence and Advertisements to be forwarded to 20, Paternoster Row, London, E.C.

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The Quaver,

December 1st, 1883.



WE had determined to issue a Christmas double number for 1883, making thirteen Quavers for the twelvemonth; but late last month it was discovered that we must either forego the double number, or else postpone our November issue. Rather than disappoint ourselves, we incurred the risk of disappointing our Readers, and adopted the latter alternative. We trust, however, that the circular issued late in November, apprising our Readers of the fact, has mitigated their anguish to some extent, especially as we promised a double number for December, and now supply more than twice the usual quantity of matter.

The musical tale, "A Change of Key," was written for this work, and appeared therein at intervals during the first year of its existence. The tale is now reprinted in better style, in complete form, and will, we hope, prove readable during Christmas and New-year's tide, or indeed any other tide, time, or season.

We take this opportunity of informing our Friends that "Letter-note School Music," Nos. 1 to 6, are now published in neat wrapper, price 8d., forming Part I of that work. It is expected that twelve numbers will complete the course of lessons. From its cheapness, we hope it will be found useful in cases where economy is a desideratum.

Reminding our Readers how much they can do to increase the circulation of THE QUAVER, if they will be good enough to make it known amongst their friends, we wish them one and all

A MERRY CHRISTMAS, AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Government Recognition of Letter-note.

TEACHERS will be glad to learn that the Committee of Council on Education have granted to Letter-note pupils coming up for school-examination the advantage of obtaining their sight-singing test in *Letter-note*, and, in the event of a staff-notation test being supplied, the Inspector is authorised to write (or cause to be written) the solfa initials underneath or above the notes of the staff.

This, we think, puts our method on terms similar to those enjoyed for so many years by Tonic Sol-fa: it is, we also think, a simple act of justice to us, to the Teachers, and to the young people themselves. Nevertheless, their Lordships might have taken a different view of the case, and it is matter of congratulation that their decision was prompt as well as favourable. Bearing in mind the strenuous efforts put forth in the interests of the Tonic Solfa notation when its usefulness was threatened,—the Memorial, and canvass of the musical profession for signatures thereto, the deputation to wait upon Earl Spencer and Mr. Mundella, with other etceteras of like nature—it would not have surprised us at all if Letter-note had been kept waiting and hoping for a long time. But, from the date of the first and only communication forwarded to the Education Department until that of the reply, there elapsed a period of just eight weeks. Which circumstance, we think, warrants the conclusion, not only that their Lordships are well informed regarding the question of Musical education in Schools, and prompt to give effect to their decisions, but also that Letter-note in coming before them was able to present a GOOD CASE.

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A CHANGE OF KEY.

By M. G.

The Associated Sons of Concord and Conviviality.

Meet in this Room

On Saturday Evenings, at 8 o'clock precisely.



UCH was the wording of a notice, conspicuously displayed in the principal room of *The Bugles*, the chief, and indeed the only, hotel in the thriving town of Slopford, Westshire. The notice had been drafted and neatly written out by the late Mr. Trunnel, parish schoolmaster and organist, the founder of the club, which at this time mustered upon its roll some dozen efficient members, with probably as many more hono- raries, *i.e.* inefficients.

Mr. Trunnel's object in establishing the club was two-fold. He wished to draw out those persons who loved music for its own sake, and tolerated the *conviviality*; and, at the same time, to draw in others who, perhaps, made too much of the latter. It is not our province to enter upon any discussion as to the propriety, or impropriety, of the under- taking: suffice it to say that Mr. Trunnel succeeded in carrying out his object. Those who could sing came forward right musically; and the others, who could only broach a stave, utilized themselves by acting the part of a sympathetic audience. Thus, as in every well constituted community, the two forces, *centrifugal* and *centripetal*—they who amused, and they who condescended to be amused—were properly balanced; and the result was the happy family which, every Saturday evening, met harmoniously and convivially at *The Bugles*.

But the club resembled a community in another respect: it contained two rival ruling powers. First, there was Mr. Larch, the present schoolmaster and organist, who naturally took a prominent part in the management of club affairs. He was a short,

dummy man, with a short, dummy manner: somewhat hot in temper, and, when offended, apt to display it. Without pretending to know more than other people, what he did was always done to the best of his ability; and his acquaintance with literature and music, although limited, was thorough. He had his own set of supporters in the club, who considered themselves bound to swear white or black, in accordance with his opinion for the time being.

Then there was the Opposition, or rather the Government, for Mr. Larch himself had almost lapsed into insignificance compared with Mr. Starch.

And who was Mr. Starch? Well, he was Mr. Starch, the influential, the indispensable, the universal! In appearance and character he was the opposite of Mr. Larch. Tall and portly; smooth of speech, and pompous in address; much addicted to wearing green spectacles, and rings and watch-guards of untold value. To be sure, people were to be found mean enough to insinuate that his eyesight needed no artificial aid, and that he himself was all gilt, varnish, and glitter, but these were ill-natured people: an immense majority believed in him and in his jewelry, accepting his urbanity of manner for kind- ness of heart, and his loquacity and pomposity for learning. He, too, had his supporters in the club, who swore white or black in dutiful vassalage.

Having a small independency, Mr. Starch was not obliged to follow a profession for the sake of a livelihood: thus, having no business of his own, he very properly took a warm and somewhat meddlesome interest in the business of other people, whose affairs he knew a great deal better than they did them-

selves. He did this, certainly not through absence of selfishness on his part, but simply because he had nothing else to do. But, meddlesome as he was, he still had the *look* and the credit of being a public-spirited individual. Of course if he had talked his friends to death about his own concerns only, they would have voted him a bore; but, his lines having fallen in pleasant places, he had few concerns of his own to talk about: the consequence was that he was quite willing to be button-holed by the hour by anybody who had a standard grievance, or a pet scheme, to ventilate. Thus he possessed some degree of popularity, for he really was, or made himself, a sort of necessity in the community. No social party, with any claim to gentility, was complete without him; because, in addition to the advantage of his conversational powers, through knowing everybody he served as a kind of cement in the most miscellaneous company. In affairs public and parochial, too, he was an autocrat: no candidate for any vacant office, from M.P. down to beadle of the parish, had much chance of success without his countenance; and no subscription-list was likely to obtain many contributions unless his name appeared near the top of the left-hand column.

Mr. Starch rode a hobby very gracefully: it was the Fine Arts, and, principally, Music. His claim to be considered a musician rested upon his powers as a critic, rather than an executant, for he neither played nor sang in company or in public. Ill-natured people again insinuated that he could do neither, and knew little of the art, except that department which consisted in blowing his own trumpet. As a critic, he was merciless: chary of praise, for he considered it derogatory to be too easily pleased; prodigal of censure, deeming it a proof of his own erudition to carp at the performances of others.

As may be imagined Mr. Starch's unsparing criticisms proved a frequent *casus belli* to the rival dynasty; for he had, in the most public-spirited way imaginable, appointed himself to the post of honorary critic to the parish church choir. And most indefatigably did he discharge the arduous and responsible duty. *This* tune was sung too fast; *that* was inappropriate; the *pianissimos* in the *Te Deum* were *butchered*, not executed; and as for the *Nunc Dimittis*—"Oh, it was *ex-cru-ci-a-tion*," pronouncing each syllable slowly and distinctly, and forcing the sounds through his clenched teeth, like the tones in the *Sourdine* stop of a harmonium. Then, lifting his jewelled hands in pious horror, he would ask, "Could nothing be done to remedy this dis-

grace-ful state of things—How long is our church music to be mangled in this way?" But he never suggested, practically, any improvement, contenting himself with fault-finding; and the fact that none of his auditory were able to detect such faults, only increased their wonder at his extreme delicacy of ear, and the awful depth of his musical knowledge. In this way Mr. Starch built up his own reputation upon the alleged shortcomings of other people; and, being endowed with unbounded loquacity and unlimited bounce, he was able to hold his own against all comers. It was rumoured, indeed, that even the Rector himself was fain to beat a hasty retreat before the impetuous charge of Mr. Starch's hobby.

All this was gall and wormwood to Mr. Larch, who, although not blind to the defects of his amateur choristers, took a pride and pleasure in their well-doing; and when the doughty champions met in fair encounter, great was the heat of argument, and many the hard words and sharp retorts which were elicited. Mr. Larch, however, generally had the worst of it—in appearance at least; although maintaining that most of the strictures were undeserved, yet, being no match for his more verbose opponent, he was not always ready with his answer or his remedy. The consequence frequently was that, waxing hot as it proceeded, the discussion abruptly terminated with a bang like the end of a squib, or the *finale* of an overture; Mr. Larch sputtering out, "Sir! if you want the thing done properly, do it yourself!" Then, wishing each other a peppery good morning, they would go their respective ways, Mr. Starch to lament over the wretched taste displayed by "that booby," and Mr. Larch to report what *Farina* thought of the choir's efficiency.

This, then, was the state of affairs at the time our sketch opens: for years a bitter musical feud had existed between the two parties, generally only smouldering amongst the members of the club, but sometimes bursting forth into a fierce flame, and setting the whole township in a blaze of discord.

The occasion to which our sketch more immediately refers was great and special. It was the last day of the week, of the month, and of the year—a coincidence of dates sufficient in itself to make the occasion an important one. With the members of the club, it was almost a conscientious duty to square accounts with the old year before commencing the rite of welcoming in the new: the season was, therefore, one which must necessarily be celebrated in the grandest

state; and distinguished by the choicest songs, the raciest stories, and the happiest toasts on record.

But the meeting was rendered doubly important, because the annual election of club officials was held on the last evening in the year. In addition to a small emolument—accruing out of the subscriptions and fines of the members—the office of president carried with it great dignity and honour, a degree of power much greater than usual being vested in the presidential chair. Like the chief ruler of a republic, the president of the club appointed all the other officials, and was, in fact, a sort of musical despot. His will was law on all points connected with the conduct of the meetings, the music to be sung, the arrangement of the programme, and the choice of executants—a device which saved much waste of time and temper, and was upon the whole satisfactory to the majority.

The constitution of the club directed that, "*Whosoever of the members distinguishes himself by superior musical attainments shall be elected President.*" The lamented founder of the club had, perhaps unconsciously, borrowed this rule from the school routine to which he had been accustomed.

The election was conducted in this way. A candidate for the office propounded a question to the meeting; if it proved a poser, the propounder was declared duly elected; but if, on the contrary, it received solution, the solver became a candidate, and in his turn offered a problem for solution. Practically, this almost ensured the election of the latter; for the unsuccessful questioner retired from the contest, and the candidates were generally few in number, in fact, for a considerable period, the only possible candidates had been the two champions, Mr. Starch and Mr. Larch.

Mr. Starch had now filled the presidential chair for several consecutive years, much to the chagrin of Mr. Larch; and the periodical crisis of an election having arrived once more, the combatants were nerving themselves for the encounter. The whole club, from senior to junior, was on tip-toe with expectation, and an extensive circle of adherents and sympathizers out of doors took almost as keen an interest in the coming conflict: sides were taken, each man had his backers, and heavy bets depended upon the result.

The eventful evening having arrived, Mr. Starch reached *The Bugles* betimes, resplendent with self-awarded decorations, and entered the room with the air of an emperor. He was in high spirits, already forestalling

victory—for his repeated triumphs had not diminished his good opinion of himself—and if his admirers did not spontaneously burst forth into "See, the conquering hero comes," it was only because most of the musical talent was ranged on the other side of the table.

Mr. Larch betrayed less confidence of manner, indeed his supporters thought he was looking rather dejected. Perhaps the cares of his official duties were pressing heavily upon him, for that very morning one of his "awkward parents" had rung the old year out by threatening to remove six olive branches from the school "unless something was done about it." What the *something* was, or what the *it*, did not clearly appear to Mr. Larch: he could only indistinctly gather that genteel objections were raised respecting *vulgar* fractions, and that scruples of conscience existed with regard to the subject of *profane* history.

Nevertheless, Mr. Larch had the look of one who was determined to win—who *must* win, and if he didn't, would know the reason why. He knew that Mr. Starch's musical attainments were somewhat superficial, notwithstanding the great appearances put forth. He considered, also, that much of his antagonist's success was due to good fortune, or good management, rather than to science, and resolved to watch closely, and leave no loophole of escape—no, not so big as the diameter of a flute hole. Generalship, and the ability to "make the worse appear the better reason," were Mr. Starch's strongest weapons, and Mr. Larch felt confident of success if the case were only tried upon its own merits.

Punctual to the second—as a musician, he prided himself upon his punctuality—Mr. Starch took the chair, and, in a neat speech of exactly fifteen minutes, introduced the business of the evening. Taking for his motto the words, *A tempo giusto*, he made a favourable impression at the very outset. The words had the *sound* of something grand: and, when Mr. Starch obligingly translated them for the benefit of his auditory, it was a fresh source of admiration at the awful extent of their president's learning. In the course of his oration, Mr. Starch contrived to extend the meaning of his motto so as to make it applicable to social and professional life, as well as to matters musical. Life, he remarked, was an orchestra. Some performers were much too fast, others much too slow; and *both* styles of performance were to be deprecated. Some were strict and correct in their time and their dealings—and such—he

felt certain—were all present—without exception—he *might* say: others introduced the “grace,” or rather the *dis-grace*, called *Tempo rubato*, and the less said about *them* the better. (Here an approving audience visibly shuddered: they did not understand the signification of the musical term used, but no matter, it was at the very least Hebrew for something very bad indeed—too shocking to be expressed in honest Saxon.) Some were always in tune with their neighbours (stroking his own hair as if to say, “Oh, what a good boy am I!”): others, rasping discords (looking very hard at Mr. Larch)r-r-r-r-rasping discords, unresolvable in accordance with recognised musical and social laws, a praise to nobody, and a terror to those who do well.

Mr. Larch began to consider whether the insinuation was not meant for him: he was not, however, obliging enough to fit the cap on his own head, and quietly bided his time, reserving his strength for the coming struggle. It was, nevertheless, fortunate for the “concord and conviviality” of the evening that other business intervened, and allowed a little breathing time before the election; for Mr. Starch could cut like a razor when he chose, and Mr. Larch's tongue was a sort of conversational bludgeon when he was fairly roused.

The musical part of the programme now commenced, and a few songs, etc., were rendered by such members as were willing to contribute.

The Sexton “did not like to remain mute,” and, with a voice clear as his own bell, and almost as loud, gave a song commencing, “Aisle of beauty, Seat of pleasure, Pew-rest joys within thee dwell.”

The Cabinet-maker regretted that the state of his Chest prevented his singing, and the only instrument he could play was a drum—leastways a conun-drum—“What is the best table to make one's self at this inclement season?” Members were polite enough to “give it up,” to the intense satisfaction of the drummer, who quickly tattooed the answer, “To make one's self *comfortable*.” True enough,” a member replied, “But you must also make it *hospitable*.”


To him succeeded the Baker, with “Tell me where is Fancy Bre(a)d,” and, considering that he was attempting a duet, single-handed, he acquitted himself admirably.

A member who was a noted angler next rendered “Gaily sounds the cast-a-net,” after which the Proprietor of the livery stables “rubbed the company down” by lustily roaring “Busy, curious, thirsty Fly.”



CHAPTER II.

HOW MR. TITLARK LOST HIS VOICE.

HE soothing power of music, aided by the "rubbing down" so skilfully administered by a practised hand, having now, in some degree, quelled the rising storm, the chair next requested that master of oratory, Mr. Titlark, to favour the meeting with a speech upon some appropriate subject.

Mr. Titlark was a little man, both short and slender, with a weak voice pitched in a very high key. But, though small corporeally, he was large in other respects: large in his own opinion, and having seen a good deal of what he considered "the world," he was altogether a larger man than the average members of the club. He was also large, conversationally, in quality as well as in quantity; for he delighted in large diction, although, unfortunately for himself, he was not always correct in its application.

Mr. Titlark was one of Mr. Starch's warmest supporters. If, however, the latter was in hopes that the coming oration would endorse his own opening speech, he must have been disappointed: on this occasion, egotism prevailed over Starch-ism, and Mr. Titlark, duly impressed with the idea that the most suitable subject *he* could select was *Mr. Titlark*, commenced as follows, his small, feminine voice contrasting drolly with his large address.

"Although I am very partial to concord and conviviality, and take an intense delight in these assemblages, I have frequently expressed my great regret that I was unable to participate in the harmonies. Hitherto, members have been indulgent enough to take the will for the deed, but they have exhibited a considerable amount of curiosity why it was I could not execute myself, although I could appreciate the proper execution of another man. Not that I would, for one moment, compare my attainments with those of our right worthy president: still, I flatter myself that I do possess some little taste for good harmonies. I think I can't do better, therefore, than relate how I sustained the loss of voice which has incapacitated me for execution; for, at a former period, I had an excellent voice, as all my acquaintance admitted.

When I was a younger man than I am now by a good many years, I filled the post of commercial traveller to a house in the soap

and candle interest, in a large town in Scotland. Very soon after my arrival there, I was directed by the principals of the house to go on a journey to a place in the far North, called the 'Eelands.' The object of my journey was to collect an outstanding debt from an Eeland laird, and to extend the connection of the house in that department of the realm. I had never been there before, but frequently had heard queer accounts of it: consequently I felt a considerable degree of hesitation in taking a journey, all alone, in such a wild and outlandish region. One didn't know, you know, what queer customers they might fall in with, or what dangerous adventures one might encounter. Why, the very name of the vicinity I had to visit was enough to give one the lock-jaw when you attempted to pronounce it: they spelt it 'Glen-gallachasneeshag,' and I've not the least doubt that my repeated efforts to articulate it gave me a fit of hoarseness which prepared for the total loss of voice I subsequently experienced.

However, duty called, and I must obey: accordingly I started. I need not occupy the time of the company by rehearsing my journey from the commencement, and the great preparations I made for it. I found the way easily enough, thanks to my extended experience on the road; and it was only when I left the stage coach, and the turnpike, that I found the least difficulty. The senior partner of our house was, sometimes, rather purse-o-money-ous, and wouldn't stand the expense of a conveyance: consequently, I was compelled to tramp the remainder of the way. But I found the 'bore-engines' remarkably civil and obliging: they think nothing of going a mile or two out of their road, in order to show a stranger the proper rowt. Yet I was sadly inconvenienced through another cause, fiddlelisset, my ignorance of the language they spoke; for they talk a queer sort of gabble—half Welsh, half Irish—which they call 'Garlic.' The Welsh, you know, adopt the leek as their national emblem; and, possibly, the Eelanders talk Garlic for a similar reason. My guide assured me it was a very ancient language, and was what Adam and Eve spoke in the garden of Eden; which, I don't doubt, is another reason why it gets the name of Garlic.

My guide beguiled the time by relating wonderful stories about the Eelanders; and

if all he told me was true, some of them were terrible tough customers to deal with. I considered it only prudent to make some cautious enquiries respecting Mr. Shooglety, the Eeland laird who was the cause of my errand. My guide was very uncommunicative on this subject: in fact, he bated his breath to a whisper when Shooglety's name was mentioned, and seemed afraid to express any opinion. This naturally alarmed me: and, being previously rather dubious respecting the propriety of venturing into his territory, my guide's manner confirmed my forebodings. I resolved, however, if called upon to shed my blood in the discharge of my duty to the house I represented, to sell my life considerably above prime cost. Having brought with me a brace of pistols, I took care to display them prominently; and, further, arranged matters so that my guide was always a few paces in advance, feeling more secure against treachery on his part, or danger from a foe concealed in a ham-bush.

After marching thus for a few hours, we neared Shooglety's residence. Considering that it was called a 'Castle,' and had a terrific name of its own, it was not a very large edifice after all, and what there was of it needed cleansing and decorating rather badly. Altogether, it had a vagabondish look about it I didn't much relish. Rather awkward, I thought, if they make me prisoner, and let me spend my days a solitary captive in the keep—a melancholy erection, with only a narrow loop-hole by way of a window, which squinted and scowled in the evening light, until it made me shudder to look at it. But there was nothing for it but to proceed: soul and body could not have held together, if I had attempted to tramp back the savage miles I had walked that day. Accordingly, my guide led the way over a bridge, and under a great, ugly arch that frowned down upon us like a gibbet, and we found ourselves in front of the brigand's den—for such I began to consider it."

Several of the members now showed signs of impatience, wondering whether this long-winded yarn really had an end. The chair, however, called the unruly members to order, and directed the master of oratory to proceed with his narration, which was most interesting and instructive—especially the remarks on garlic and its cultivation.

Greatly elated by the compliment, Mr. Titlark now put on additional power: to all appearance, he could go on spinning yarns to the end of time, and members might consider themselves lucky if they got off even then. Clearing his valves with a sonorous snort, he resumed:—

"Without a word of parley, or so much as 'ask your leave,' my guide stalked boldly in: I followed, relying on his knowledge of the place and the people. The only inmates visible were a woman, a child, a dog, and some ducks: so far well, I thought, nothing as yet to be alarmed about. A few words spoken in Garlic by my guide, seemed to explain the object of my visit. 'Come, Ben,' said the woman, leading the way to an adjoining apartment. How ever she knew my name was Benjamin, I could never understand, but I followed, asking no questions, for the woman's knowledge of English was about equal to my proficiency in Garlic.

Having ushered me into what was evidently a superior room, the woman, together with my guide, proceeded in search of Shooglety; and, while waiting his coming, I took advantage of the opportunity afforded for reconnoitering. The apartment in which I now found myself had quite a military look: several muskets were hung on the wall, also a tremendous sword with a basket-hilt, a short sword like a bayonet, and a battle-axe. But a more suspicious-looking weapon attracted my attention immediately: it was a four-barrelled blunderbuss, and it made my very blood run cold when it first caught my sight. The horrid thing was pointing directly towards me, and I could look straight into its ugly black muzzles, like the mouths of so many hissing snakes, ready to strike. What *could* the diabolical weapon be? I had never seen anything like it before, but I had heard of an 'infernal machine,' with ever so many barrels, and concluded this was one of them things. And infernal enough it looked: the stock of the blunderbuss was something of the nature of a pouch—could it be an ammunition pouch, I thought—then the barrels were of different lengths, and, instead of being parallel, they diverged like the spokes of a wheel. Near the muzzles, they were connected loosely by means of a finger-length or so of silk ribbon; and apparently were moveable, so that they could be adjusted to any angle, and spread out their fire. Really, it was enough to shake one's nerves; and I quickly edged off out of the line of fire, and examined it in comparative safety. I observed, further, that the barrels were strengthened, here and there, with hoops of polished metal; and the muzzles were decorated with ribbons of various colours, hanging down like streamers on a recruiting serjeant's hat. The whole thing was a puzzle, but at last it dawned upon me what the villainous weapon was—it must be an air-gun! It gave me quite a turn to think how easily a man might get his quiet-us, and never as much as hear the report

of his own execution. Those engines are such secret, treacherous things, you know: they don't make as much noise as a pop-gun, and are as sure as the best gun-powder. Alas! it was only too evident what sort of work the infernal weapon was intended for—

But hark! a footstep approaches, and there is barely time to adjust my pistols, when in walked Shooglety, followed by the woman bearing a cold collection—a very welcome thing despite my fears, for toil and fasting had made a reflection of some sort absolutely indispensable. Shooglety was a tall, powerful man, with a rough crop of fiery red hair, and a beard to match: the latter did not hang gracefully down in civilized fashion, but projected stiffly from his chin, as if it was intended to serve as a tray for the carriage of small articles—its proprietor might very well have used it to keep his snuff-box upon, and inhaled the fragrance as he went. His arms were bare, and so were his knees—for he had no trowsers on, and only wore that apron-sort of a thing they call a 'kilt'—and such portions of his skin as were visible were not remarkable for cleanliness. Well now, I thought, of what use was the hundred-weight or two of soft soap, as per invoice, which appears as an item of the debt due to the House I represent. But, whatever the soft soap was wanted for, he evidently used it sparingly in his toilette, and exhibited none of it in his manner.

'Good-day,' said he in a rough voice, bawling in a loud tone as if talking to a person a quarter of a mile off.

Mentally calculating my fussical strength compared with his, I determined to speak respectfully.

'Have I the honour of addressing Mr. Shooglety?'

'To be surely,' he grunted.

'I have the pleasure of waiting upon you as the representative of Messrs. Ash and Kelp.'

'Did she wait long?'

At first I thought he was in a jugular vein, and was making fun of me; but, as he appeared perfectly in earnest, I signified to him that I had just arrived, and had waited upon him respecting that little bill.

'What bull?' he asked, 'Has that deevle of a beast got out again?'

He *must* be in a jugular vein, I thought again. But no, his evident perplexity testified to the contrary; it was the Garlic that blocked up his understanding—how *shall* I make him comprehend?

'The account, Mr. Shooglety, for sundry pipes of oil and other etceteras—the House I represent expected to have heard from you.'

'The pipes! To be surely she'll hear—was she fond of hermony?'

I signified to him that the House I represented was not unreasonable, but they naturally expected to have their money paid in proper time.

'Proper time,' he bawled, 'there's no a body in all the Eclands can play so proper than Shooglety.'

Then, crossing the room with the strut of a brayvo, he seized the air-gun.

An awful moment it was! I grasped my pistol, and, with my finger on the trigger, watched his every motion. A feet-off-arms did not appear to be his intention just then; for he shouldered his air-gun, and marched up and down the room like a sentry on duty. But I watched him closely, nevertheless.

One of the barrels rested on his shoulder, and the others hung loosely behind his arm. The pouch he tucked under the other arm: next, he took a sort of flexible tube, and, putting the end of it into his mouth, he blew through as if to clear it. What is coming now, I wondered!—but a new idea seized me. After all, its only a pipe—as he calls it—one of them queer hubble-bubble things they smoke with in foreign parts.

I really felt quite relieved by this discovery, and could scarcely refrain from laughing outright at the absurdity of my apprehensions—when, all of a sudden, the infernal thing went off with a horrible roar, an awfully hideous noise that made my brain quiver. It wasn't exactly an explosion; but a noise like the rasping of a rusty saw, the thrum of a cotton mill, and the shriek of a railway whistle, all combined into one prolonged peal of thunder.

What fresh horror could this be?—it was evidently intended for music; for there stood Shooglety, with head erect and eyes flashing, his cheeks puffed out with blowing, and his elbow working away like an ostrich attempting to fly. Had the performer been 'the monster Polifemy,' with his 'hundred reeds of decent growth, To make a pipe for his capacious mouth,' he couldn't have made a greater clamour. Such a tornado of discord I never heard in my life; and, in a small apartment, ten foot by six, it was overwhelming: it made the window rattle, and set the glasses dancing on the shelf—Oh, my poor ears! Then it was such an unearthly din: first, there was a sort of ground-floor bass, all on one note; next, above it, there was an upper-floor bass, all on one note in like manner: and, a-top of all, there were the shrill, harsh notes of the tune, which pierced my head as if a red hot wire was run through from ear to ear.

It was unendurable: the uproar was stupefying—*blinding* me. I broke into a cold perspiration, and could scarcely stand for giddiness. Louder and louder waxed the awful clangour, faster and faster raced the tune: and, as Shooglety played on, I could almost fancy I saw his form gradually swell. Bigger and bigger it grew as he stood between me and the crimson evening sky, looking redder and more fiery than ever in the lurid twilight, and pumping away as if he was the parish engine making a last desperate effort. Bigger and bigger yet, until his figure filled the whole range of my vision—it was all Shooglety. Bigger still, and it was all head—a red-hot, fiery-fringed head—then all was darkness!

I must have lost consciousness, and staggered to the door through the thunderstorm, for I found myself outside, the cool breeze fanning my temples, and Shooglety's instrument of torture roaring like a hot-blast furnace in-doors: very probably he was so much engrossed with his occupation that my absence escaped his notice. Presently my guide made his appearance. Striving to get the red-hot wire out of my ears, and scarcely able to speak, I remarked that the laird was an astounding executioner.

'The laird,' he said in surprise, 'that's no the laird—the laird's gane away South this vera mornin'.'

'Why then, who is that performing?'

'Who but Shooglety, the laird's piper, the best player in the shire.'

'But his name is the same as the laird's.'

'So 'tis, but maist everybody's name in this glen is Shooglety.'

Here was a wild goose chase, truly: to end in a pair of split ears, too. The wire in my head made me feel like a spitted goose; and I determined to return forthwith, late as it was, being rather doubtful whether my poor skewered ears might not be subjected to further torture—you know what a delicate ear I have. My guide protested: Shooglety pressed me to stay—he wanted me to hear another grand reel, composed by P. Broch, a distinguished composer in that part of the world—but my brain reeled at the very suggestion: another such performance would have ended me by the time it was ended, and I pleaded urgent business. Shooglety was kind enough to lend us a couple of stout nags to carry us over the ten miles or so we had walked; and, bidding the powerful executor farewell, we took our departure."

The "master of oratory" paused to take breath, or else to heave a sigh over his past

sufferings, when several of the members, impatient at the length of his oration, burst in with—

"But you were to have told us how you lost your voice."

Mr. Titlark replied that he was "just coming to it" when they interrupted him. He evidently could have gone on for an hour longer, much to his own satisfaction; but a glance at the chair seemed to inform him that brevity was desirable.

"The fact is," he said, slowly and solemnly, with the look of one who was peering down the telescope of time into the remote past, "I never got rid of the wire. I could feel it descending by degrees: if it only gets to my toes, I thought, I might get rid of it altogether; but no, it gradually descended until it settled in my voice, and there it has remained ever since."

"Well now," remarked a member, "that is extraordinary; I have heard of a wiry voice before, but never understood the cause of it until now."

"Nonsense!" retorted the Sexton, "it's all hum—how *could* a pain in a man's ears spoil his voice?"

"But it ruined mine," reiterated Mr. Titlark, "besides which, if it did not leave me prematurely deaf, it affected my ears: why, even to this day, if music is the least degree out of tune, it is positive torture to me."

Mr. Larch thought how often *his* ears had been bored on account of Mr. Titlark's infirmity; for, like the president, the "master of oratory" was a candid fault-finder. Mr. Larch, however, kept his ideas upon this subject to himself, and mildly suggested—

"Are you quite sure it was not the 'cold collation?' You must know a Scotch pint is almost equal to an English half-gallon—perhaps the mutchkin was too much for you."

"Not a bit of it!" shrieked Mr. Titlark, *in altissimo*, "the cause was exactly as I have stated. My medical attendant informed me, afterwards, that the dilation of the olfactory nerve was so tremendous during the ordeal, that something was bound to give way under the extension: consequently it took effect in the weakest part—the bronkies of the throat."

Here a member was rude enough to echo, *sotto voce*, something about "the donkey's throat," but Mr. Starch immediately reprimanded him for using language so unparliamentary. His esteemed friend was quite right. The human voice was so delicate and sympathetic that it frequently suffered through injuries or ailments affecting other organs. He need only instance the familiar fact that

we could neither sing nor speak properly if the nose were stopped. He must thank his valued friend for the entertaining narrative with which he had favoured the meeting. They all felt what a loss it was to themselves that their respected friend was unable to illustrate practically his skill in the art of which he was so ardent an admirer.

He was about to resume his seat, when one of the junior members was bold enough to question the correctness of his reasoning.

"A blind person," said the objector, "hears more acutely than one who can see."

Mr. Starch felt annoyed at the interruption; and half suspecting that some covert allusion to himself was intended, he naturally objected to his own case being adduced in order to refute his argument.

"Not always," replied he, "and even if it

were invariably true it proves nothing, for the conditions are different. But take the case of a deaf and dumb person: we all know that an individual who has been deaf from his birth is, of necessity, dumb also; and this is a case exactly parallel with that of our esteemed friend."

He was immediately attacked on the flank by Mr. Larch.

"Not strictly parallel; for Mr. Titlark has not been deaf and dumb from his birth, nor *blind* either, therefore—"

It was now Mr. Starch's turn to interrupt, his spectacles flashing green fire, and his whole manner betraying the annoyance felt.

"The chair holds an opinion directly to the contrary," said he, taking refuge both literally and metaphorically in its capacious arms, and abruptly closing the discussion.



CHAPTER III.

THE ELECTION.



HE "concord and conviviality" of the meeting was now positively at an end. Such an ebullition of temper on the part of the chair had never occurred before within the recollection of the oldest member. It was now war to the knife between the opposing factions: no quarter would be asked, and none could be given. Unfortunately too, further contributions of songs, toasts, and 'drums were not forthcoming to still the troubled waters once more, for the next business of the evening was the election of president for the ensuing year; and, sternly resolved to fight the matter out, members were now awaiting the commencement of the conflict.

In compliance with the rules of the club, as already explained, it first devolved upon the outgoing president to propound a question, which, if found unanswerable—as possession was nine-tenths of the law—settled the point without further trouble. The questions usually propounded were not of a very abstruse nature: the general mental calibre of the club did not enable members to solve, or indeed appreciate, anything really difficult, and the problems, therefore, were frequently of the most flimsy character.

On the present occasion, however, a hotly contested election had been anticipated from the first, and Mr. Starch knew full well that unless the proposer brought forward a poser he must vacate office. For months he had been thinking out a terrible problem, and had succeeded in contriving something which, he felt sure, must floor every member of the club. When he was setting out for *The Bugles* on the eventful evening, as he left his residence, Mrs. Starch enquired with much solicitude respecting his prospects of success—"Oh, trust me for that, my dear," replied he, "I have something in my pocket which will pluck every man of them as clean as a Christmas goose." So saying, he mounted his hobby, and, like a second John Gilpin, rode off to victory.

Amidst breathless silence, Mr. Starch drew forth his pocket-book—an omnivorous receptacle supposed by the vulgar to contain the wealth of the Indies and the wisdom of Solomon—and produced therefrom a little piece of music paper. Throwing the scrap down on the table, and ironing out the folds with the rings on the fourth finger of his

right hand, he asked in a semi-careless sort of way,

"Can any member oblige by informing me in what key this fragment of music is?"

Now, in so doing, Mr. Starch was a little out of order. The bye-laws of the club directed the act to be accompanied by a formal declaration stating that this was THE question upon which the election depended.

Mr. Larch, who had been watching as closely as if he had to commence on a demisemi-quaver in a *prestissimo* movement, immediately detected the lapse. A lapse it certainly was, for if Mr. Starch chose to act dishonourably—although nobody who knew him would ever dream of such a thing—still, if he were so inclined, he might impose upon the meeting a second question in the event of the first receiving solution: on the other hand, members, not aware of its importance, might not give due attention to the question, which being left unanswered for a specified time settled the election.

Mr. Larch, however, was quite equal to the occasion, and promptly called the chair to "order." A novitiate member obligingly hailed the waiter, thinking something in *his* line was wanted. But Mr. Larch impatiently motioned him aside, and addressing the uppermost nob on the presidential chair rather than Mr. Starch himself, he drew the attention of that article of furniture to the unheard of breach of regulation which it had just committed.

Mr. Starch at once, and in his blandest tones, apologised for his inadvertence, and Mr. Larch's supporters mentally scored one point towards the game. Having in due form complied with the requirements of the bye-laws, Mr. Starch handed round the slip of paper for inspection, making a remark to the effect that they were engaging in a contest for the possession of the official key, and and the finding of one key entitled to hold the other.

The paper only contained a few bars of music, beautifully written, every note and symbol being as neat and regular as if executed by the tool of a cunning workman: it had a signature of some half-dozen or so flats, and a number of very suspicious-looking accidentals were dotted about the music like skirmishers on a battle-field.

First honorary member looked at the paper, then at the ceiling, and passed it on with a smile.

Second honorary member performed a similar ceremony, and so on to the last.

Then the other side picked up the gauntlet. First efficient member gazed at the paper eagerly; but gradually a grave expression stole over his countenance, and he passed it on.

Second efficient member wildly suggested a key, but as he was unable to state any reason for the opinion expressed, the bit of paper passed to Mr. Larch, whose turn it now was to attempt a solution.

Mr. Larch scrutinised the writing with great care; put it down on the table and pored over it; took it up again and examined it; read it over and over, studying every character with the utmost minuteness; then, after holding the paper against the light as if it was a doubtful five pound note, he put it down once more, and definitely announced his conviction that the music was in the key of E flat minor.

Mr. Starch rose again, and smilingly enquired—

"But, if it is in the key of E flat minor, how does the erudite member account for the absence of D natural, distinctive of that key?"

Ah, where indeed! thought Mr. Larch, where indeed! But after a fruitless search for the vagrant natural, time was called and the champion was bowled out. Alas! for the rank and file if their leader is knocked over so easily!

It was now the turn of Mr. Starch's backers to score a point or two; in fact they considered the contest to be virtually at an end, for who, short of Mr. Starch himself, could now read the riddle? Mr. Starch did not, in so many words, say, "I prophesied as much;" nevertheless, he conveyed the idea by his manner. The "master of oratory" took occasion to remark that "it was an *accidental* misapprehension caused by *natural* debility of the metaphysics." Mr. Starch's other admirers, too, joined in chorus, praising the marvellous acumen, united with condescending good nature, which he had displayed. With ostentatious modesty Mr. Starch deprecated such invidious complements, but sucked them dry, nevertheless.

Mr. Larch, on the other hand, looked the very picture of chagrin, and might have sat as a model for a painting of the chief personage in "Paradise Lost." Quite oblivious of the chaff that was flying about his ears, he was sorrowfully resting his chin on his hand, and his elbow on the table. Perhaps the grain of the mahogany presented some rude resemblance to the lines and spaces of the musical staff, for he gazed intently down-

wards, a finger of his disengaged hand busily tap-tapping here and there as if still groping for the missing D natural.

Meanwhile the inscrutable slip of paper, merely for form's sake, was being handed round for examination.

While the cabalistic writing is in transit, it becomes necessary to introduce one of the members who as yet has taken no part in the business of the evening. Sitting in a listless attitude, and apparently immersed in a study of the very deepest brown, was a young man of some twenty-six years of age, Bobbins by name, a weaver by trade, politically a Larchite, and a zealous member of the church choir. If "grief lay hidden in his bosom," the cause was personal and domestic rather than public and electoral. A recent immigrant into the United States—otherwise termed wedded life—with falling wages and rising prices, and certain juvenile responsibilities looming in the future, he was busily scheming how to interweave the warp and weft of life, or, in other words, how to make both ends meet. When the slip of paper was placed in his hand he was in that state of mind, which, it is popularly supposed, induces a man to sell his soul to the archfiend for the reversion of an estate, or for a brass button, just as it might happen. Sheer desperation must, therefore, be his excuse, if excuse is needed, for his audacity in attempting to solve a problem propounded by so great a luminary as Mr. Starch, and to which even Mr. Larch himself had failed to find an answer.

Apparently guessing at random, rather than as the result of his own knowledge, Bobbins recklessly blurted out—

"The key of E flat minor, to be sure."

Possibly his opinion was grounded upon the fact that Mr. Larch had already suggested this key, and that the right and proper thing to do was to back his leader under all circumstances.

Mr. Starch, in a tone of pity, and speaking in his peculiar style, delivering the syllables as if he were counting out golden guineas, rejoined, "But my young friend must have omitted to notice the absence of the D natural."

Poor Bobbins, rather in a fog as to what that had to do with the matter, examined the music again; but, failing to discover the missing symbol, he retorted in the same spirit of reckless daring,

"Well then, it ought to be, and if it ain't the only reason is because the composer hadn't a D to put it on."

Philosophers sometimes look so far ahead that they lose sight of things which lie

at their feet, and it was so in Mr. Larch's case; but this blundering shot of Bobbins' hit the target, and at once gave him the cue.

"Hear, hear!" he shouted in a voice husky with excitement, "Bobbins is right, he is quite right—hand me the paper, Bobbins."

Bobbins, altogether unable to understand what "was up" now, handed Mr. Larch the paper as carefully as if it were made of some explosive material, but discreetly held his tongue, and tried to look knowing.

"I knew it was so," cried Mr. Larch again, after looking at the paper as if he meant to drill holes in it by mere ocular power, "How it escaped me I don't know, but it is the key of E flat minor to a certainty, and if the D had appeared in the music it must have been natural."

Now, Mr. Starch, if you are wise, retreat gracefully while there is time. You are fairly outflanked, your position is untenable, and if you do not speedily evacuate, the enemy may drive you out at the point of the bayonet.

But Mr. Starch was not wise just then, in fact he was very much *otherwise*. He had reckoned so confidently on victory that he could not brook defeat. Thus to be checkmated by a junior member, too, was beyond endurance, the thing must not—could not be. He was thus led to disregard good old Dr. Watts' caution about letting his angry passions rise, and they rose to 212° Fahr. directly. If he did not, in consequence, act as if his jewelled hands were made to tear out Mr. Larch's eyes, he at least endeavoured, might and main, to rend his opponent's arguments to pieces.

"But what reason has the member for such an assertion? What right has he to introduce the D? He might just as well try to prove a three-legged stool to be a four-legged one by adding another leg to it. How dare he make an assertion so ridiculous and preposterous?"

"No," retorted Mr. Larch, "but, if ever it had been a four-legged stool, anybody—even the most short-sighted—could tell it had been, even although a leg was wanting; and it is just the same with the music."

Mr. Starch could not, for one moment, admit this view of the case, and took his stand upon the stool theory; but he quickly came to the ground, and, unfortunately, he came down rather heavily.

Mr. Larch's own thermometer was now indicative of an extremely high temperature, and meteorological appearances generally were what are termed "threatening." All at once the idea flashed across Mr. Larch's mind

"Surely I have seen this passage before!—Bobbins!" he cried "run round to the school, and ask for Seraphini, Op. 56."

Bobbins went and came like a flash of lightning. Mr. Larch, turning with the air of a pretidigitator to "Moonlight Whisperings," eighteenth bar on folio 2 of the opus aforesaid, pointed out the identical passage from which Mr. Starch's terrible problem had been copied note for note, *with the D natural appearing in it*.

Mr. Starch was floored this time—no doubt about that—whoever else might be president of the club, it was quite clear *he* was out of the election. He blustered and wheedled, smiled and frowned by turns; he "rose to explain;" tried to prove this was that, and that something else—but all in vain, the Philistines were upon him; the weaver's web, spun at a venture though it was, had fairly tripped him up, and now his reign was over! If, with his usual tact, he had agreed to consider the problem solved, and good-naturedly joined in the laugh at his own bad fortune, he might have come down a little more gently, but now the laugh was altogether against him. Even his bottle-holder, Mr. Titlark, was on the point of letting off a small squib on the subject of "two stools," but the chair, by some adroit stroke of policy, contrived to extinguish it betimes.

Mr. Starch had calculated chances carefully and well. He took it for granted that Mr. Larch would succeed in finding the key, but was ready with a plausible objection which, he hoped, might keep Mr. Larch at bay until the expiration of the time allowed for finding a solution. Everything occurred exactly as Mr. Starch anticipated, and had it not been for the unseen eventuality of a mere outsider hitting the mark, the problem might have secured the election. But hard fate, leagued with Bobbins, ruled it otherwise.

It did not, however, occur to any of the members that Mr. Starch's judicious manipulation of the music was, to say the least, sharp practice. "All is fair in love and war," says the proverb: doubtless members extended its meaning so as to include elections also, and in all probability the other side would have acted in the same way if it suited their purpose.

Mr. Bobbins—for now he had earned what sailors style "the handle to his name"—might have claimed the office of president; but he knew that the victory was due to Mr. Larch's skill rather than his own. Mr. Larch, on the other hand, ignorant that Mr. Bobbins' hit was quite a random shot, did not consider himself justified in wearing laurels which he had not earned. After a

warm and wordy discussion, however, it was moved, seconded, and carried "that Mr. Larch be elected president for the ensuing year, and that the emoluments accruing for the year now terminating be handed over to Mr. Bobbins."

The treasurer reported that he held a balance of six pounds, seventeen and fourpence halfpenny, all legitimate expenses having been paid, and straightway made Mr. Bobbins richer by that amount. The wages so easily earned quite relieved the weaver's burdened mind, for the windfall would comfortably tide his household over the coming event, and render the expected tenant's "coming in easy." Surely, if the Bobbins of the future is not arriving with a silver spoon in his mouth, at least he is bringing good luck with him!—Thus thought the Bobbins of the present as he pocketed his unlooked-for prize. It was a happy New Year's Eve at the weaver's that night.

The weighty matter of the election having been settled, there now only remained certain formalities to be complied with, and the annual meeting was over. Mr. Starch

handed over the keys and ensignia of office to Mr. Larch, whose formal installation would take place on the next evening of meeting. Mr. Starch performed the ceremony with what grace he could under the circumstances. In accordance with custom, he ought to have made an appropriate speech on the occasion: perhaps the effort proved too much for him, at all events he got over his disagreeable duty with all possible dispatch.

The chair having been vacated, the seat of authority was solemnly turned upside down, and Mr. Starch as solemnly installed between its upturned legs, and declared duly elected "Lord of Misrule;" for the laws of the club thus fulfilled the time honoured usages of Christmas, and enacted that the out-going president should assume this fantastic title as a kind of ironical solatium for the loss of his seat.

This ceremony brought the meeting to a termination; but, in consequence of his newly acquired honours, Mr. Starch had one more important duty to fulfil which will form the subject of the succeeding chapter.



CHAPTER IV.

THE CHURCHYARD.



T was a custom, amounting almost to a law, that the lord of misrule should at the close of the annual meeting proceed in state, solemn and unattended, to the tomb of the founder of the club, and there drink to the memory of the deceased musician. This eccentric usage was established by a former lord of misrule who had irreverently adopted this mode of "first-footing," and the ceremony was afterwards kept up annually, partly in honour of their departed comrade, and partly because members expected it. Their superstitious feelings caused them to view it as a tremendous feat of daring, which, however much they might object to performing themselves, they enjoyed mightily when done by somebody else, for it yielded a pleasure akin to that experienced on witnessing a terrific ascent on the tight-rope, or a mortal combat behind the foot-lights.

In obedience to club custom, therefore, Mr. Starch set out upon his doleful pilgrimage. He disliked the duty extremely; for although he might have felt a melancholy satisfaction in visiting the shrine at a more favourable opportunity, and although he was not one likely to be overcome by dread of the supernatural, still there was a time for all things—the hour was late, the night dark and gloomy, and the aspect of affairs out-doors was anything but pleasant after leaving the warm and well-lighted room at *The Bugles*. The dismal errand upon which he was engaged could not fail, therefore, to have a depressing influence upon the most elastic temperament. But the lord of misrule was not in a vivacious mood just then: his recent defeat, all unexpected as it was, had wounded him sorely: for once in his life he had experienced the hard shock of a positive reverse, for once his stratagems had been foiled, and finesse on the one hand and bounce on the other had alike broken down in the hour of need.

It was in this frame of mind that Mr. Starch reached the gate of the churchyard. Now he must part with the two or three adherents left him in the hour of adversity: they had accompanied him thus far through a sort of feeling akin to that which sends people to witness an execution, or to take a last look at one who is departing on some dreadful and dangerous enterprise. His heart sank

within him as the rusty, creaking gate swang back and closed of its own accord, leaving him alone with the dust of generations. The silent remembrancers of friends and foes departed, which at any other time he might have passed without a thought, now impressed him deeply, and all the more because of the sudden contrast they presented to the scene of festivity which he had just left. Each memorial, silent and dead though it was, had a voice—a voice which spoke with terrible emphasis of the transitoriness of things mundane. The scene, the time, and the circumstances, all conspired to deepen the impression, and a feeling of awe stole over him as he walked down the familiar path. The noise of his own footsteps now seemed almost desecration amid the silence, and he reverently turned aside and walked on the soft turf. But this again was too quiet: it looked as if he was ashamed of himself, and wished to sneak in on the sly, instead of marching boldly forward as became a man of his position. "Pshaw!" he said, what does it matter? But it did matter, nevertheless, and it was clear his courage was rapidly leaking away.

Doubtless the untoward events of the evening weighed like a nightmare upon his spirits; but beyond this he felt a sort of vague, nervous anxiety, as if something—he knew not what—was about to happen. "I'm not afraid," he kept whispering, "what have I to be afraid of?" He tried to shake off the feeling: now and again, when startled by the unusual appearance which objects presented in the dark, he would compel himself to go up to the cause of his alarm, and feel it all over with his hands like a blind person.

After spending a very uncomfortable ten minutes or so thus, groping his way towards the point of his destination, just as he was nearing the tomb he stumbled and fell heavily on the turf, grazing his shins, and smashing to atoms the vessel containing the intended libation. Smarting with pain, his nerves shaken, and his head confused and giddy, he scrambled to his feet, deprived even of the Dutch courage which the shattered vessel might have supplied. "What is to be done now," he thought, "never mind, I'll tell them I drank it," and then turned to retrace his steps.

Was the spirit of his deceased friend at that moment hovering near, and, justly in-

censed at being defrauded of the expected honour, was it about to inflict upon him a terrible punishment for his dishonesty? For, just as he turned, the lord of misrule thought he saw against the dim sky a tall, black SHAPE! He could just catch sight of it from the corner of his eye, but directly he looked round the apparition vanished. He tried to persuade himself that it was all fancy; and rubbed his eyes, and pinched his leg in accordance with the practice of ghost-seers from time immemorial. But in vain—there was the SHAPE still at his side: he saw it distinctly enough when he looked sideways, but when he tried to confront it the phantom vanished in a moment.

It was horrible! He quickened his steps, hoping thus to escape from his unearthly companion, even now trying to keep up the appearance of courage and to overcome the tendency on the part of his legs to run away with him. But still the SHAPE remained at his side. If he *could* only get a sight of it,—but no; try as he might it always evaded him directly he turned his head round. Trembling with excitement, and both hot and cold with perspiration, he at last regained the pathway leading to the gate. Here terror prevailed; an overwhelming sense of dread, which bore down every other consideration, gave strength to his tottering limbs, and he flew along the path with the speed of a hunted deer.

His friends whom he had left at the gate were still there, anxiously awaiting his return. With voices hushed to a whisper, they were timorously speculating as to what had become of him, when they were startled by seeing him tear round the corner. Fear is infectious; and his sudden apparition, groaning and making the most hideous noises, completely terrified them. Even in broad daylight they might have failed to recognise him, so altered was his appearance; but in the dark they could only dimly distinguish his figure rushing headlong upon them. This was quite enough—without a moment's hesitation, they scampered down the lane as if old Saint Nicholas, with the conventional fork and tail all complete, was in hot pursuit; one of them, however, with wonderful presence of mind, locking the gate as he fled.

A few seconds brought them to *The Bugles*: a few more sufficed to explain the state of matters, indeed their blanched faces and trembling voices spoke more eloquently than words. Lights were hastily obtained. Such members of the club as were still hanging about, together with the ordinary loungers of the inn, quickly mustered, and gathering

courage with their numbers sallied forth to meet this bare-faced invasion of the arch-enemy. A singularly bare-faced proceeding it was, truly, to intrude thus audaciously upon consecrated ground; and some of the less daring hurried off to apprise the Sexton, possibly judging that next to the Rector himself he was best qualified to deal with this encroachment upon his territory.

A goodly company they were who went forth to meet the invader; armed too with sticks, stones, or anything else handy. They started boldly enough; but, in the short space of time required to reach the churchyard, the electric influences of courage on the one hand and timidity on the other arranged the combatants in corresponding order: thus, with Mr. Larch at their head and Mr. Titlark guarding the rear, they arrived at the gate.

The lord of misrule, paralyzed with fear, and almost desperate through his captivity in the lonely churchyard, was clinging to the gate—a lump of helplessness. He had just voice enough left to shriek faintly for help as his friends came to his rescue. Old feuds were quite lost sight of in presence of such an emergency, and Mr. Larch was the first to run to his aid, the others standing back at a prudent distance.

"Thank you—oh, thank you," said Mr. Starch, speaking from the very bottom of his heart. To breathe the air of freedom, and hear the tones of a familiar voice, was like paradise regained; and the well-known lane, dark and dismal as it looked, appeared to him the gate of heaven.

"What ever is the matter with you?" enquired Mr. Larch.

"There it is again—don't you see it too?" whispered Mr. Starch.

"See what?"

"That dark figure, standing beside us and pointing to the sky."

"Can't say I do," rejoined Mr. Larch, brushing away a stalk of grass which was hanging from Mr. Starch's wide-awake.

"Thank God!—it's gone now," said the lord of misrule with a sigh of relief.

"What—this? Why, man, its only a straw!—you're not afraid of a straw, are you?"

But Mr. Starch *was* afraid of a straw; for a straw was the sole cause of his fright, and of the awful commotion which it engendered.

Whether the "concord" had proved too much for the lord of misrule, or whether the "conviviality, we are unable to say—history is silent on this point—but the straw was the proximate cause of his disaster.

In a moment he saw it all. "Oh, don't say a word to them—pray, don't say one word."

Mr. Larch was too magnanimous an antagonist to resist such an appeal. Instead of congratulating himself on the fact that he now had Mr. Starch quite under his thumb, he tucked his opponent's arm under his own, and stepped forward to the gaping crowd.

"It's nothing," he said, "those fools, Sniggers and Snezewort, locked the gate, and Mr. Starch couldn't get out—that's all."

The crowd, defrauded of its vested rights in the ghostly drama which *was* to have been enacted, immediately turned upon those rash disturbers of the peace, and might speedily have made ghosts of *them*, especially of Sniggers, who had been making much capital out of his feat of carrying off the key. But Mr. Starch was himself again, and stayed execution by remarking, that Mr. Larch having previously found the key for him to his sorrow, his deliverer had once more found it to his intense relief—and the crowd, with a laugh, dispersed.

The reconciled potentates walked away arm in arm. Mr. Titlark, who could not understand the turn matters had taken, accompanied them, and he scarcely believed his ears when he heard Mr. Starch bestowing encomiums on the much-abused church choir. "I don't care a straw which way it is," he thought—but a straw, you know, will sometimes turn the scale, and effect a revolution; and so it was in this case. The parochial

discords were now permanently resolved, for never more would the town be set by the ears through the squabbles of the rival chiefs; and as an earnest of the coming millenium, when the friends parted to go their respective ways, the trio came to a *finale* with a grand display of complimentary pyrotechny, and mutual wishes for a HAPPY NEW YEAR!

After a climax so auspicious, one might have expected that "concord and conviviality" would have thriven more than ever at *The Bugles*. But no—the spirit of rivalry which had given pungency to their meetings was now quite extinct. Moreover, the conviction had gradually forced itself upon Mr. Larch's mind that there was a better way of amusing and being amused; that if people only wanted music as an accompaniment to beer, they might as well dispense with it *in toto*; that if music did not attract for its own sake, it was only because it was not of the right kind, or else not rendered in the right manner, and he soon resolved to try the experiment. Taking counsel with the choir, he instituted a series of weekly meetings for the practice of music. Being open to all without distinction of rank, age, or sex, the undertaking prospered, and on the arrival of another New Year's Eve a grand performance was given, to attend which even the few remaining members of the club forsook *The Bugles*.

Thus, to the greatly increased peace of the good town of Slopford, the Change of Key made an

END OF CONCORD AND CONVIVIALITY.



THE LETTER-NOTE METHOD.

I believe I was one of the very first teachers to take up the Letter-note method in the country, and certainly can claim to be the first to teach the system in the Midlands; and now, after 20 years' experience, am able to say I am more than ever convinced that it is by far the best method of teaching to sing at sight. It embodies all the best points of the Sol-fa method, and from the earliest stages pupils are accustomed to sing from the universal notation.

Erdington, Birmingham, May 21st, 1880.

THOMAS G. LOCKER,

*Conductor of Perry Barr Choral Society, Sutton Coldfield Philharmonic Society
Camphill Amateur Musical Society, Birmingham Musical Union, etc.*

I have much pleasure in stating that I have used the Letter-note method for 10 years in Schools and Collegiate Seminaries, giving an average of 20 lessons per week, and after trying most other systems I am quite convinced the Letter-note is decidedly the best. The text-books are systematic and thorough; my pupils are very much interested in their lessons, make rapid progress, and soon learn to sing at sight from the established Notation. I have a large number of letters from Principals of Schools, expressing themselves highly pleased with the Letter-note method.

The Park, Tottenham, London, Nov. 2nd, 1880.

JOHN ADLEY.

I cordially welcome any measures that may facilitate the reading of Choral Music by the masses, and am of opinion that the Letter-note method is well calculated to that end. It combines the principles of the ordinary Tonic Sol-fa system with those of the Staff notation, and disposes of some of the objections which have been urged against the former.

London, Nov. 6th, 1880.

CHARLES E. STEPHENS, *Hon. Mem. R.A.M.*

With pleasure I testify that the specimens of the Letter-note method obligingly forwarded are clear, practical and useful. The method has too a special value, as standing in an explanatory attitude between the Stave notation and Tonic Sol-fa method, and so being of assistance to students of either principle.

London, Nov. 10th, 1880.

E. H. TURPIN,

*Hon. Sec. and Member of Board of Examiners, College of Organists,
Examiner, College of Preceptors; etc.*

I am sure your system is an additional facility to the teaching of sight-singing.

London, Nov. 17th, 1880.

EDWIN M. LOTT,

Visiting Examiner, International College of Music, London.

I am happy to say I think the Letter-note system is likely to be of great benefit to the Choral Societies and Classes in which I am introducing it. I can give no better testimonial than the fact of my having adopted it everywhere.

Dollar, Dec. 15th, 1880.

JAMES M'HARDY.

I have much pleasure in stating that the Letter-note method has been adopted by a Class in Birmingham of nearly 200 members, of which I am the Teacher, and I consider the method excellent.

Birmingham, Dec. 16th, 1880.

ALFRED R. GAUL, *Mus. Bac. Cantab.,*

Professor of Harmony and Singing at the Midland Institute.

Your system, I feel quite sure, is an admirable one.

Birmingham, January 3rd, 1881.

C. SWINNERTON HEAP, *Mus. Doo. Cantab.,*

*Conductor of the Birmingham, Stoke-on-Trent,
Walsall, Stafford, and Stone Philharmonic Societies.*

Your system seems to me to retain most of what is so good in the Tonic Sol-fa System; I mean the associating the same syllables with semitones, and the characteristic effect of each number of the scale.

July 9th, 11.

SIR ROBERT STEWART, *Mus. Doc.,
University Professor of Music at Dublin.*

The marvellous results obtained by the Tonic Sol-fa notation as regards sight-singing should, if possible, be secured to students of the established system, and this problem he believed had been solved by the Letter-note method.

From a Lecture delivered at Trinity College, London, by HUMPHREY J. STARK, Esq., Mus. Bac.

The undermentioned gentlemen have kindly signified their approval of the method in the following terms:—

"We are quite of opinion that the Letter-note Method is well calculated to produce good results in training to sing at sight."

W. S. BAMBRIDGE, Esq., *Mus. Bac. Oxon., Professor of Music at Marlborough College.*

EDMUND T. CHIPPE, Esq., *Mus. Doc. Cantab., Organist of Ely Cathedral.*

SIR GEORGE J. ELVY, *Mus. Doc. Oxon., Organist of Her Majesty's Chapel, Windsor.*

WILLIAM LEMARE, Esq., *Organist and Director of the Choir of St. Mary, Newington, and Conductor of the Brixton Choral Society, London.*

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London: F. PITMAN, 20 & 21, Paternoster Row. Edinburgh: JOHNSTONE, HUNTER, & Co.



Welcome, merry Christmas.

Maestoso. KREUTZER.

Soprano: Wel - come, Wel - come, mer-ry Christ-mas, mer-ry Christ-mas! Now a-

Alto: Wel - come, Wel - come, mer-ry Christ-mas, mer-ry Christ-mas! Now a-

Tenor: Wel - come, Wel - come, mer-ry Christ-mas, mer-ry Christ-mas! Now a-

Bass: Wel - come, Wel - come, mer-ry Christ-mas, mer-ry Christ-mas! Now a-

Piano: Accompanying music for the vocal parts, including a grand staff with treble and bass clefs.

-gain we hail thy light, Now a- gain we hail thy light, Rule us with thy

-gain we hail thy light, Now a- gain we hail thy light,

-gain we hail thy light, Now a- gain we hail thy light,

WELCOME, MERRY CHRISTMAS.

jo - vial pow-ers, Sway us by thy ge-nial might, Sway us by thy ge - nial might.

Sway us by thy ge-nial might, Sway us by thy ge - nial might.

Sway us by thy ge-nial might, Sway us by thy ge - nial might.

Sway us by thy ge-nial might, Sway us by thy ge - nial might.

SOPRANO SOLO. *Vivace.*

Christ - mas, spread thy sweets be - fore us, Wreaths we bring to

deck thy shrine, Christ - mas, shed thy bles - sings o'er us,

Christ-mas reigns, his prai - ses sing, Christ-mas reigns, his prai - ses sing!

WELCOME, MERRY CHRISTMAS.

Christ - mas, spread thy sweets be - fore us, Wreaths we bring to deck thy

Christ - mas, spread thy sweets be - fore us, Wreaths we bring to deck thy

Spread thy sweets be - fore us, Wreaths to deck thy

shrine, Christ - mas, shed thy bles - sings o'er us, Christ - mas reigns, his

shrine, Christ - mas, shed thy bles - sings o'er us, Christ - mas reigns, his

shrine, Christ - mas, shed thy bles - sings o'er us, Christ - mas reigns, his

prai - ses sing! Christ - mas, shed thy bles - sings o'er us, Christ - mas

prai - ses sing! Christ - mas, shed thy bles - sings o'er us, Christ - mas

prai - ses sing! Christ - mas, shed thy bles - sings o'er us, Christ - mas

WELCOME, MERRY CHRISTMAS.

ff ad lib. *Fine.*

reigns, his prai - ses sing! Christmas reigns, his prai - ses sing!

reigns, his prai - ses sing! Christmas reigns, his prai - ses sing!

reigns, his prai - ses sing! Christmas reigns, his prai - ses sing!

ff ad lib. *Fine.*

SOPRANO SOLO. *Vivace.*

What though skies be dark and scowl - ing, Though the glad - some

cres

day - light fails, What though winds are fierce - ly howl - ing,

cres

cres *f* *Repeat the preceding Chorus.*

Yet thy voice of love pre - vails, Yet thy voice of love pre - vails.

f *Dal segno al fine.*

